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Chevsur

einen vom Hinterkopf herabhaengenden, dem chinesischen gleichen Zopf abrasiert. . . ."[27]

From the evidence of the various investigators which we have presented above, it may be seen that if we accept the opinion of Countess Uvarov that the Khevsurs of the Caucasus originated from the Cossacks of the Dniepr, we might logically assume that the Circassians, the Udins and the Hittites are also of Slavonic origin, or that all these peoples, including the Hittites, borrowed this custom from the Cossacks of the Dniepr (*Zaparojtsi*)—which, in short, is a paradox.

We think that this custom existed among the Khevsurs for many centuries before the *Zaparojtsi* made their appearance in history. In the meantime the fact of the presence of this custom among other peoples of the Caucasus besides the Khevsurs shows their possible relation with each other and points to Asia Minor as the place of origin of this custom, whence it was brought to the Caucasus. Later, in the new era, this custom could have been borrowed by the Cossacks of the Dniepr from the Circassians, who occupied the northern slopes of the Caucasian ridge and controlled the adjacent territory around the Sea of Azov and the Russian steppe,[28] whence they were gradually forced out by the newcomers into the mountains of the Caucasus, where they resided until the Russian conquest in the second half of the nineteenth century. This conquest resulted in the mass emigration of the Circassians into the lands then occupied by the Turks.

To the above mentioned factors revealing the heterogeneity in the composition of the social groups among the Georgian Highlanders must be added the different ways and manners of adoption as practiced by the people which made relatively easy access for foreign elements into the communities, where they were admitted as full-fledged members and in time were gradually absorbed and assimilated.

There are different ways and manners of adoption. A person can be adopted either by the whole community as such, or he may be adopted by a private family or a private person. When the

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[27] *Ibid.*, 13.
[28] Klaproth: a, 312.

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person is adopted by the community the procedure has a religious meaning and character. So, in order to become a member of the Pshav community, the stranger is obliged to get membership in the sanctuary (*Khati*) of the community and through this act he automatically becomes a member of the social group—the community. He has to bring the sacrifice prescribed by custom and treat all members of the community with a feast. The sacrifice consists of an ox and a sheep, which are killed in a ritualistic manner (the throat is cut, as the Hebrews of the Old Testament did, and the blood is used for sanctification—cleansing of the person by anointing, washing or rubbing) by the attendant of the sanctuary, and a quantity (*chapa*) of wine is brought as a sacrifice to the patron saint of the community and used as a supply for the feast. The feast, which is arranged in the holy precincts of the sanctuary and supplied with the sacrificed victuals, has a sacramental meaning. After this feast the stranger is admitted as a full-fledged member of the community and is put under the same marriage regulations as every native member of the group.

The adoption by a social group, as mentioned above, did not exclude the possibility of a private adoption, that is, the adoption of one individual by another, or the entrance of an individual into a private family as one of its members.

These people practiced different methods of adoption, such as "breast-biting," anointing with consecrated oil, hair-cutting, exchange of bullets, "silver-eating," and the custom called *zedsidze* (adoption of a son-in-law). Adoption by "breast-biting" consists in touching by the candidate with his teeth the bare breast of his prospective foster mother, the wife of the head of the family, or generally the eldest woman in the family.

This custom was practiced throughout Georgia and among other peoples of the Caucasus in past times and is still in existence. It is known under the Georgian name of *dzudzus kbena*, meaning "breast-biting."

The Svans practice a very interesting form of "breast-biting" which they call *Linturali*.[29]

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[29] Linturali: 138.